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AUTHOR Lule, Jack
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ABSTRACT

The shooting down of KAL Flight 007, a South Korean airliner, by a Soviet jet fighter, and the resulting deaths of the 269 people on board, has brought into focus the Reagan's administration's equivocal relationship with the Soviet Union, provided insights into the channels of power in the Soviet military hierarchy, and led other nations to concentrate on international codes of conduct for the superpowers. A study explored in detail one of the first news reports about the flight. In addition, the study examined United States representations of the Soviet Union, and more broadly, the relationship of news to cultural life. The first account of the shooting of Flight 007 in the "New York Times" (September 2, 1983) was analyzed by using Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach. The analysis found that in the "New York Times" report, the international incident: (1) was portrayed in the narrow context of United States affairs, (2) was firmly grounded in American culture; (3) gave heavy emphasis to American officials, American reactions, and possible American reprisals; and (4) affirmed a dominant United States role in world affairs. The analysis also revealed that the report could be seen as a drama of victimage that creates and then castigates an enemy shared by a group in a dramatic enactment that offers integration, identification, and social cohesion. (Thirty-one references are included, and the "New York Times" article is appended.) (MS)

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HERMENEUTICS AND VICTIMAGE:

A CRITICAL APPROACH TO NEWS OF THE SHOOTING OF KAL FLIGHT 007

Jack Lule

Faculty of Communication

The University of Tulsa

Tulsa, Oklahoma 74104

(918) 592-6000

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HERMENEUTICS AND VICTIMAGE:
A CRITICAL APPROACH TO NEWS OF THE SHOOTING OF KAL FLIGHT 007

On Sept. 1, 1983, a South Korean airliner, bound from New York to Seoul, with 269 people on board, was shot down in Soviet territory over the Sea of Japan by a Soviet jet fighter. There were no survivors. A prolonged international crisis followed. Demonstrations were held in many nations to protest the shooting.

Soviet officials charged that the plane, Korean Air Lines Flight 007, was engaged in a spying mission for the United States, and that the political furor was provoked by misleading statements of U.S. representatives. U.S. and South Korean officials said the plane had strayed from its course, and charged the Soviet Union with murder. The matter is still in dispute. Hersh (1986) suggests that the airliner had wandered off course, crossed paths with a U.S. reconnaissance flight, and was misidentified and shot down by the Soviet jet fighter. Pearson (1987) argues the airliner was engaged in reconnaissance. Dallin (1985) brings together conflicting views from many sides.

The shooting was an extraordinary event. Five years later, it is possible to see that the incident touched nerves throughout the international body politic. It brought into focus the Reagan's administration's equivocal relationship with the Soviet Union. It gave insights into the channels of power in the Soviet military hierarchy. And it led other nations to concentrate on international codes of conduct for the superpowers.

For some in the United States, the shooting revived dormant but seemingly ever-present concerns about the nature of the Soviet system. For others, the shooting raised questions about the wisdom of establishing amicable relations with such a system. For still others, the shooting exposed the black inner soul of the state and confirmed that the Soviet Union indeed was an evil empire.

Communication researchers have recognized the especial significance of the shooting. Studies have traced the portrayal and interpretation of the shooting, concentrating particularly on U.S. news reports, which followed events with voluminous, dramatic coverage. For example, Paraschos and Stewart (1985) studied sources used by three U.S. newspapers and three television networks in their reports on the shooting. They found that about 75 percent of the attributed information came from Western sources. The U.S. executive branch accounted for 62 percent.

McLeod and Craig (1987) studied the influence of political alignment on portrayals of discrepancies about the shooting. Studying media coverage in 73 nations, they found that political alignment correlated strongly with the presentation of discrepancies. National alliances played a key role.

CRITICAL FRAMEWORK

A critical approach, which would interpret news reports in the context of social and cultural forces, might complement and extend such research. A critical study would see news reports

about KAL Flight 007 as an opportunity to explore images and portrayals of the Soviet Union by U.S. news media and to consider the relationship of the news reports to the creation and maintenance of cultural beliefs. From this perspective, which can draw upon U.S. critical and cultural studies of John Dewey, Kenneth Burke, Hugh Duncan, Clifford Geertz, James Carey and others, the news media are seen as a site from which to mine insights into U.S. social and cultural life.

Applied critical analysis of news reports would call for methods drawn from literary or philosophical studies. Forsaking the broad scope of content analysis, the study instead would seek the tension and texture of an interpretive approach. Symbols, suggestions, and subtleties, in words and between lines, would be sought and studied.

From the variety of interpretive methods, this study will draw upon the hermeneutic approach of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1971, 1976, 1979). Hermeneutics, the interpretation of cultural texts by means of analysis and commentary, can be a broadly conceived method of great rigor and scope. Ricoeur has concentrated particularly on methods for understanding cultures through texts, and thus his approach seems particularly apt for the study of news.

Ricoeur's work should be especially suited for a critical study of news. It provides a vigorous, methodological tool for interpretive analyses. But of perhaps more importance and interest, Ricoeur's approach, it will be shown, has links to

traditions of U.S. social and cultural thought that continue to influence critical studies in this country.

The purposes of this study then are to explore the use of Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach for critical studies of U.S. news; to analyze, through hermeneutics, news reports about the shooting of KAL Flight 007; and to find in the news a site to consider U.S. representations of the Soviet Union, and more broadly, the relationship of news to cultural life.

RICOEUR AND CULTURAL THEORY

Ricoeur's philosophy and methods have evolved and change. Born in Valence, France, in 1913, Ricoeur studied at the Sorbonne in the late 1930s and was influenced by the philosophical approach of Gabriel Marcel. As a prisoner of war in Germany during the Second World War, he was allowed to pursue his studies of phenomenology; following the war, he published analyses on the philosophy of the will.

In the 1950s and 1960s, reacting to the embrace of structuralism and psychoanalysis by many in European philosophy, Ricoeur examined both of these disciplines in a series of essays and books. The confrontation led him to incorporate structural and symbolic aspects in his philosophical approach.

In the 1970s, Ricoeur pursued studies into language and culture. He added a part-time position at the University of Chicago to academic duties in France. His continued interest in language and texts resulted in important works on the problems of metaphor and the theory of interpretation.

In this decade, Ricoeur's primary work has been in narrative theory. His focus, however, remains constant: the understanding of people and cultures through hermeneutic interpretation of texts. "I assume," he said (1979, p. 73), "that the primary sense of the word 'hermeneutics' concerns the rules required for the interpretation of the written documents of our culture." And increasingly, Ricoeur's conception of culture has been influenced by strains of U.S. social and cultural theory.

His most recent work has been placed within a framework of culture and symbolic action that shows the direct influence of Clifford Geertz (1973) and Kenneth Burke (1966, 1969, 1984). In setting out basic assumptions for ideology and utopia, significant concepts in his work, Ricoeur says both concepts "have ultimately to do with the character of human action as being mediated, structured and integrated by symbolic systems" (1976a, p. 21). He continues, "My purpose is to extend Geertz's concept of 'symbolic action' (the expression itself comes from Kenneth Burke) i.e., of action symbolically articulated, to the polarity of ideology-utopia."

He recognizes distinctions in the language of Geertz and Burke. In lectures recently published from the mid-1970s, he notes, "Burke says that language in fact is symbolic action. Geertz's point, though is that action is symbolic just like language" (1986, p. 256). Through his own emphasis on action as symbolically mediated, Ricoeur (p. 255) thus comes to ideology as integration. "At this stage, we reach the level of symbolization,

something that can be distorted and something within which lies the process of legitimation. Here the main attitude is not at all suspicion nor even the value-free but conversation."

Ricoeur's most recent work in narrative theory is also based upon insights of Geertz and Burke into symbols and culture. He writes (1984, p. 57), "In Geertz's words, 'culture is public because meaning is.' I readily adopt this initial characterization which clearly indicates that symbolism is not in the mind, not a psychological operation destined to guide action, but a meaning incorporated into action and decipherable from it by other actors in the social interplay."

With recognition of symbolism as meaning incorporated into the action of actors, Ricoeur, like Geertz, embraces the fundamental notions of Burke's dramatistic view of the world (Burke, 1969; 1972; 1976). Ricoeur's hermeneutic method might, without violence, be adapted to explorations of the critical concepts that Burke set forth.

It is, quite possibly, a potent marriage. Burke's work may be enhanced by the rigorous methodology of hermeneutics. And disciples and critics have looked for ways to use Ricoeur's work to confront questions of ideology and social theory on more than epistemological grounds (Van Den Hengel, 1982, pp. 176-82; Howard, 1982, pp. 169-77; Ulin, 1979, pp. 91-125). Authority, order, hierarchy, and victimage, conceived as dramatic enactments in social and cultural contexts (Burke, 1984, pp. 274-93),

perhaps can fruitfully be studied through the lens of hermeneutics.

For a critical study of news, the use of Ricoeur's hermeneutic method -- placed as it is within frames of symbolic action and public meaning -- should be most valuable. In this way, news can be seen as a symbolic act that shapes and is shaped by cultural context. A dramatic enactment, news turns occurrence into tale, event into account, while drawing from and giving to hierarchial order and social cohesion. News then is valuable not only for understanding events, but for understanding what was said about events, and for considering the significance of what was said.

Hermeneutics can also brings to the critical task its traditional emphasis and appreciation for the "personal commitment" that underlies research and thought (Ricoeur, 1979, p. 100). Hermeneutics resists the positivist desire for the interpretation of a text, and offers a gentle, reflexive reminder that our work is shaped by the culture that we hope to study. An analysis, after all, is something said about what was said, the latest drift in the unending conversation.

Thus, the work of Ricoeur should be a valuable approach for a critical study of U.S. news. Rather than another violation of French thought, what James Carey has justifiably decried as "the sacking and pirating of French philosophy" (1985, p. 40), the adaptation of Ricoeur's work offers an approach marked by insights of European critical thought, yet rooted in an American

tradition of the study of symbolic action. The argument here is not framed in national or ethnocentric terms. It is framed in cultural terms. Any research, but above all critical research, should be mindful of the social and cultural life in which its argument develops, the tension and texture of context. This study offers the hermeneutic philosophy of Paul Ricoeur as a rich addition to explorations of American social and cultural life.

METHOD

Ricoeur's method is difficult to condense. His bibliography contains more than a dozen books and several hundred essays. His analyses are suited to the subject at hand. He has no "cookbook" of interpretation, easily applied in step-by-step designs. Yet with this acknowledgement of the complexity of Ricoeur's approach, it is possible to derive basic guidelines from his work, guidelines essential to hermeneutic interpretation.

A preliminary step is the examination of text structure, borrowing freely from the work of structuralist scholars such as Levi-Strauss (1967) and Roland Barthes (1972). Ricoeur attempts to "decode" a text, revealing dominant actors and acts, narrative patterns, and the "logic of the operations" (1976, p. 84).

A second step examines the metaphors and symbols of a text. Ricoeur isolates and interprets significant symbols, implicit and explicit. "Symbol" is employed in Peirce's sense, that is as a sign related to an object by an agreement or convention of culture (Peirce, 1985, p. 16).

According to structuralists, such as Levi-Strauss (1967, p. 226), cultures -- and cultural texts -- order experience through opposition of metaphoric elements, such as nature and culture, individual and institution, and good and evil. Ricoeur accepts this structuralist axiom, but uses structuralist principles only as a preliminary step for consideration of texts in full cultural context (1981, p. 160).

After the analysis of structural and symbolic aspects, Ricoeur attempts to construct the "world of the text," the referents, assumptions, beliefs, and the "system of values to which the cultural background of the text belongs" (1971, p. 145). Text world refers not to a world view of a culture, but the text's own world that shapes and is shaped by culture.

The concept of the text world is central to Ricoeur's analysis. As he states (1977, p. 220), "Hermeneutics then is simply the theory that regulates the transition from structure of the work to world of the work. To interpret a work is to display the world to which it refers."

The fourth and final step of Ricoeur's hermeneutic analysis is the act of appropriation. "To appropriate is to make one's own what was foreign," Ricoeur says in Interpretation Theory (1976, p. 43). Capturing two moments, appropriation is the reader's possible self-understanding derived from the text, as well as the critic's understanding of that process.

The text remains central to the process. Rather than positing some ideal reader who acts upon a passive text, Ricoeur

sees the text as offering its world for appropriation. "The text speaks of a possible world," Ricoeur says (1976, p. 88), "and of a possible way of orientating oneself within it." The final goal of interpretation then is the understanding of the possible world offered by a text.

It is important to stress that this understanding -- the hermeneutic analysis -- is itself an act of appropriation. The text projects a world to be appropriated by individual members of a particular culture. But because of the permanence of the printed word, the text can outlive its culture and offer its world to other cultures, which derive interpretations quite different from (but no less meaningful than) the original culture.

Ricoeur's favorite examples in this regard are the letters of St. Paul. Originally addressed 20 centuries ago to the Romans, Corinthians, and other groups, the letters are still read and interpreted by modern Christians -- and hermeneutic scholars. Ricoeur's hermeneutic analysis therefore reflexively views itself as just one part of a chain of interpretation. With this acknowledgement, Ricoeur removes himself from a positivist affirmation about the meaning of a text.

PROCEDURES

News reports about the shooting of KAL Flight 007 offer an excellent opportunity for hermeneutic insights. What was said about the shooting, especially in U.S. news reports, can have significance comparable to the shooting itself. Interpretations

of the shooting by U.S. news, and the interpretations of the interpretations, provide the focus of this work.

This study will analyze, through Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach, the first account of the shooting of Flight 007 in the New York Times. Cited by Merrill (1968) as one of the world's elite newspapers, the Times is the most widely read newspaper within U.S. government circles (Weiss, 1974) and the most widely quoted (Gau, 1976). It is invaluable for research into U.S. news and political affairs.

Analysis of one report in one newspaper, even the New York Times, raises questions of significance. Unquestionably, hermeneutics relegates one to microscopic analysis. That is the limitation and strength of critical interpretive studies. They are informed by the belief that symbolic acts of culture matter, and that understanding how they matter must involve analyzing the minutiae of forms.

Happily, analysis of the Times lead report can be defended on other grounds. The lead report can be expected to have influenced subsequent themes in the Times. The front page of the Times too might have signalled directions for other newspapers and mass media. The Times report also might have provided an initial frame of action or reaction for its many influential leaders and readers. For close reading and detailed analysis of a news report about a major international incident, the lead Times account should be considered worthy of study.

It is important to stress that the purpose of the following interpretive analysis is in no way an attempt to comment upon the newspaper's coverage of the shooting of Flight 007. Such a study, of course, would be worthy and important. But the purposes of this study, as already stated, are to explore the use of Ricoeur's hermeneutic analysis for critical studies of news, and to consider U.S. news images of the Soviet Union and the relationship of such images to cultural life. Such purposes call for close analysis of the individual report.

NEW YORK TIMES ACCOUNT

On Sept. 1, 1983, a front-page story, datelined Tokyo, appeared in the New York Times, reporting the disappearance of Korean Air Lines Flight 007. At that time, the fate of the plane was unknown. The first stories about the shooting were printed on Sept. 2. Thirteen stories were devoted to the attack on that day, including transcripts of press conferences and texts of official statements. As events progressed over the next two weeks, more than 100 articles eventually were printed in the newspaper about the incident.

The first New York Times story on Sept. 2 about the shooting appeared beneath a headline that spanned the front page in thick, capital letters: "U.S. SAYS SOVIET DOWNED KOREAN AIRLINER; 269 LOST; REAGAN DENOUNCES 'WANTON' ACT." The story ran in the far-right column, beneath the subheads, "A FRUITLESS SEARCH," and "President Calls Meeting of National Security Council for Today." The report carried the by-line of Robert D. McFadden and had no

dateline, which in the New York Times usually means the story was written in the home city, New York.

Evidently the report was a compilation of staff and/or wire service reports, although the article does not say this. It was a lengthy account, 51 paragraphs, with sources cited from around the world, including Santa Barbara, California, where President Reagan had been vacationing, and Washington, D.C., where Secretary of State George Shultz and State Department officials briefed reporters. Eight paragraphs of the report appeared on page A1, with the rest continued on A4.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

a) Actors.

In the 51 paragraphs of the account, 48 actors appear. The term "actor" is defined simply as persons or things performing actions in the account. Thus actors include the Korean air liner, the Soviet jet fighter, President Reagan, and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko. The actors also include groups such as governments "from around the world," Canadian airline pilots, and "people all over South Korea."

No one actor dominates the report, not even the airliner itself. Instead, the account shifts actors from paragraph to paragraph, weaving in descriptions, details, actions, and reactions. Most of the actors are representatives of world governments, especially the United States. Nine actors are U.S. government officials or spokespersons. Three are Soviet officials, three are Japanese, and two are South Korean leaders.

The report also mentions the foreign ministers of Britain, France, and Sweden.

The array of actors reveals the broad, global scope of the report. Besides supplying detailed information on the shooting of the airliner, the New York Times report supplies a wide review of U.S. and international reactions.

An examination of actors suggests that the story is firmly grounded in U.S. culture. The attribution of the lead, "the United States said yesterday," specifies the nation. Reactions of the president, "members of Congress," "other American officials," Secretary of State George Shultz, and the State Department also affirm cultural context. The U.S. emphasis does not necessarily imply bias or ethnocentrism on the part of the reporter or editors. Perhaps unavoidably, the account is firmly rooted in culture.

A preliminary outline of a textual world emerges from the study of actors. The marshaling of the many international diplomats suggests that what is being offered is not merely a portrayal of the act, but a reaction against that act and a possible consensus. The actors, especially the U.S. actors, function not to portray but to react. Through the actors, the text portrays a world confronting a seemingly eternal problem: How does the community respond to what it sees as evil?

b) Acts.

Examination of the acts suggests they are used to construct a world responding to evil. Many of the acts concern reaction and response. President Reagan "expressed" revulsion. In

capitals around the world, governments "called in Soviet ambassadors to deliver outraged protests." Japanese officials "called the incident" very regrettable. The French Foreign Ministry "expressed" sharp indignation. The British Foreign Ministry "called the incident" deeply disturbing. The Swedish Foreign Minister "said he was" deeply shocked. Canadian airline pilots "called it a despicable, bloody criminal act." The news story focused a great deal of attention on global response to the shooting, constructing a story of action and reaction.

Acts in the account also emphasize that the plane was given no warning, contrary to "international aviation rules." The second paragraph states the missile was "fired without warning." The text later cites Secretary of State Shultz who affirms, "there was no evidence that the Soviet jets had signaled or warned the airliner." And six paragraphs later, the report states that the plane "was shot down without warning by an air-to-air missile." Again, in a summary of unanswered questions about the incident, the report stresses the lack of warning: "Finally, why would an attack be carried out when a warning signal might have sufficed to make a plane land?"

Such emphasis on a warning is revealing. The report dismisses the Soviet statement, repeated twice, that the plane <u>had</u> been warned by Soviet interceptors and had ignored their efforts to direct it to a landing site. The report emphasizes and dramatizes the absolute violation of the act, stressing that 269 people were shot down, <u>without warning</u>.

The stress on a warning also makes sense in the international, diplomatic context, assumed by the report, of a world of international codes of behavior and established procedures. The report presents the shooting not merely as a terrible act of violence, but as a violation of international law, a communal offense, an act which demands communal reaction.

Another feature of the acts: The news report is presented in very dramatic terms. The lead states the act plainly; the airliner "was shot down." The second paragraph, though, lavishes much more detail and drama on its description. "There were no known survivors of the attack in which a heat-seeking missile was said to have been fired without warning at the airliner by an interceptor that had tracked it over Soviet territory for two and a half hours." This is relevant information -- and pure drama.

The text also incorporates a terse exchange between the Soviet fighter and its ground command, included in the report for emphatic, dramatic effect:

> "Take aim at the target."
>
> "Aim taken."
>
> "Fire."
>
> "Fired."

The portrayal of acts transforms abstract, complex ideas into simple, highly dramatic presentations. In the report, a complex, international event is presented as dramatic, cold-blooded murder.

c) Narrative.

Organizing the text chronologically reveals that the earliest event mentioned is a 1978 incident also involving the Soviet Union:

> A crisis atmosphere surrounded the incident, one of the most serious international aerial confrontations in years. In 1978, a Soviet fighter forced a South Korean jetliner down in northern European Russia, killing two passengers.

The transition, "a crisis atmosphere," is obvious. Yet the paragraph's information is important. In journalistic terms, the information strengthens the news report by adding details. In structural terms, the information links the shooting of Flight 007 with the past incident, creating an impression of a pattern of aggressive behavior by the Soviet Union.

Yet concerning a similar incident, perhaps as relevant, the text is silent. In 1973, an Israeli warplane shot down a Libyan airliner, killing 106 people. Although the Israeli shooting took place 10 years before the shooting of Flight 007, the 106 deaths make it at least as pertinent as the 1978 Soviet incident in which two people died. But noting the Israeli shooting would not offer the text a neat, dramatic pattern of behavior, a portrayal of a repeated violator.

The report jumps in chronology from 1978 to the night of Sept. 1, 1983, and includes two separate accounts of events. The first says the jet "left New York at 11:50 Tuesday night, refueled in Alaska 10 hours later and vanished from Japanese

radar screens less than 5 hours after that." With drama and precision, the text pinpoints the minute: "The airliner was lost at 3:38 A.M. Thursday, Japanese time (2:38 P.M. Wednesday, Eastern daylight time)."

Later in the report, an hour-by-hour, 15-paragraph account of the flight is given. "At 3:12 A.M. Thursday (2:12 P.M. Wednesday, New York time)," a Soviet fighter pilot reported sighting the airliner; at 3:21, he reported the altitude, and at 3:26, he radioed that he had fired a missile and the target was destroyed. The text continues:

> Four minutes later, the Secretary of State said, the Soviet pilot reported the Korean aircraft at 15,000 feet. And eight minutes later, he said, the airliner disappeared from radar screens.

The minute-by-minute account makes for compelling reading. It adds realism and precision and drama.

The report then focuses on the many international reactions and condemnations. The narrative takes an interesting turn. In contrast to the minute-by-minute account of the attack, most of the international reactions are reported with no indications of when they occurred -- not even the traditional "said yesterday" or "said today." The responses by the many U.S. representatives and the governments of South Korea, Japan, Britain, France, and Sweden are offered together in time. The narrative effect is of one chorus, united in outrage.

The narrative does not stop with the actual reactions to the shooting. Future reactions and potential reprisals are included.

President Reagan has called a National Security Council meeting "to discuss possible reprisals." The United States and South Korea have requested a United Nations Security Council meeting, "expected to begin debate today." In an interesting paragraph, the report involves itself with future debate on the incident, gathering and summarizing what it calls "numerous unanswered questions."

The reconstruction of the text thus indicates the importance of its narrative aspects. The text not only traces a minute-by-minute account of the incident, but provides selected historical context, a chorus of reaction, and some suggestions as to future actions and directions.

METAPHORIC LANGUAGE

a) Binary Metaphors.

Structuralists suggest that texts often will contain implicit binary metaphors that organize action; overcoming the contradictions of such binary terms is the purpose of the text (Levi-Strauss, 1967, p. 29). In the New York Times story of the shooting of the airliner, it is possible to find basic elements of good and evil opposed. A more subtle variation on this opposition also can be discerned -- lawful and lawless. The shooting of the airliner is opposed to international law. The heavy stress on the airliner receiving no warning is an explicit reference to lawlessness. Indeed, lawful procedures are reviewed by the text:

> Under international aviation rules, which are endorsed by the Soviet Union, an established procedure for an

> interceptor to warn a straying aircraft at night is to flash lights at irregular intervals while dipping its wings. The intercepted plane responds by flashing its navagational [sic] and landing lights. There was no indication whether any such exchange occurred.

The emphasis on international law and the failure of the Soviet Union to follow accepted procedure opposes the lawful to the lawless as a variation on good versus evil.

Another important binary opposition in the report pits global consensus against the violator of international law. The opposition many:one is established by the array of actors expressing condemnation. According to the text, the shooting excludes the Soviet Union from the community, isolates it, and sets up the opposition of many against the one.

b) Metonymy and Synecdoche.

Interpretation of the report is aided by attention to synecdoche. A key replacement takes place in the lead paragraph of the story. The charge that the South Korean airliner has been shot down by a Soviet plane is attributed: "the United States said yesterday." A few government spokespersons are replaced by the entire United States. The synecdoche is repeated in a quotation of Secretary of State Shultz. "'The United States reacts with revulsion to this attack,' said Mr. Shultz."

In the analysis of structure it was noted how the synecdoche helps ground the text in U.S. culture. But the implications of the phrase are even greater than this. It helps dramatize the incident, transforming the complex and international tragedy into

a simplified dispute among two nations, and contributing to the portrayal of an opposition between the United States and Soviet Union.

Indeed, the Soviet Union receives similar synecdochic replacement, when the text states that the airliner "was constantly tracked by the Soviet Union" and that the South Korean president "accused the Soviet Union of 'a barbarous act' that 'deserves the censure of the entire world'."

The text is understood better with recognition of the assumptions of a modern cultural opposition between the United States and Soviet Union, implicit in the synecdoches. As much as any two mythic rivals, such as Athens and Sparta, these two nations have come to represent a polar opposition in social, economic, and political spheres. The shooting of the South Korean airliner could be seen as a confrontation between South Korea and the Soviet Union. Yet the text draws instead upon an assumed opposition between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Thus, in the lead paragraph, charges of the shooting are attributed to "the United States." The reactions by the President, Congress, and the Secretary of State, which serve to ground the text in U.S. culture, also help establish the opposition between the two nations.

Similarly, the treatment of Soviet statements can be better understood in the context of this opposition. As soon as the Soviet explanation is introduced, the text rejects it:

> A Soviet explanation late yesterday was rebuffed by the State Department as "totally inadequate." The Soviet statement did not acknowledge that a Soviet plane had shot down the airliner and did not accept responsibility for the incident, the State Department said.

Through synecdoche, the text also continues to develop the theme of a U.S. cultural consensus: The United States makes the charge of the shooting; the United States acts with revulsion. The creation of a world of global consensus against the violator of the international code also is aided by synecdoche. Government officials are represented as nations, which are represented in a world community.

A WORLD OF THE TEXT

a) Literal Referents.

Construction of the text world begins with a review of the literal referents noted by the analysis, such as key actors, acts, settings, and institutions. The lengthy account offered many such referents. Of special interest have been details of the modern political scene: the many nations, the institutions of power, such as the U.S. National Security Council and the U.N. Security Council, the communication through national ambassadors, the presence of international rules and norms of behavior. The text world calls forth the modern world of international politics, with nations tied to each other in complex ways. It is a world of balance and tension, of relationships and interrelationships, of actions and reactions.

A review of the literal referents also finds the text was dominated by U.S. officials and institutions. The presence of so many U.S. references in a report of an international incident has suggested a world in which the United States assumes a influential, dominant role. President Reagan called a National Security Council meeting "to discuss possible reprisals." Secretary of State George Shultz "demanded an explanation from the Soviet Union." The State Department "rebuffed" a Soviet explanation. The text portrays a world in which the reactions and influence of the United States are an important force in world affairs.

b) Beliefs And Assumptions.

The account offers beliefs about being in the world. Some beliefs already have been alluded to, including the belief in the dominant influence of the United States in world affairs and the belief in the interrelationship of nations on the international scene.

But the primary beliefs and assumptions in the New York Times story concern a more profound state of affairs. The report is constructing a world in which the international scene is made up of a community of nations, and the shooting of the airliner is seen as a violation of community standards that must receive community censure.

In this world, global policies and laws have been established to sustain order and maintain control. There are assumptions that nations will abide by the laws. But the law has been violated. The news account not only portrays in detail the

specific violation of international law, but also portrays the response by the international community, especially the United States, to the act.

In the world of the text, the first response is the outrage and revulsion of its world to evil. The first charges of evil are leveled in the name of the United States. The president, as communal leader, then expresses his revulsion. Members of Congress and other American officials erupt in outrage. This is more than pertinent information about the shooting. This is the portrayal of a cultural consensus. Drawing and selecting from a multitude of chaotic, confusing events, the text fashions and portrays a world of consensus.

The second response by the text to evil is the creation of a global consensus to portray the isolation and exclusion of the offender from the community. The text says, "the United States and South Korea requested a United Nations Security Council meeting on the incident." The text says, "In capitals around the world, governments called in Soviet ambassadors to deliver outraged protests." The text quotes South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan as saying the Soviet Union "'deserves the censure of the entire world'." The news account projects a world confronting the ancient problem: How does the community respond to what it sees as evil? For the New York Times story, the censure of evil is a communal affair and is responded to in communal fashion.

It is not suggested that the news story was biased or ethnocentric, nor that particular reporters or editors harbored conscious or unconscious motives in handling the story. Rather,

the news story is viewed from a cultural perspective, and seen as a symbolic form, which creates a kind of world in the context of a particular culture.

APPROPRIATION

a) Address.

An analysis can discern the offering of a text world for appropriation through studying means by which readers are addressed. The use of direct address is relatively rare in news stories. Yet the New York Times account contains an intriguing paragraph that leaves a description of the attack and begins to summarize and question.

> Amid conflicting reports and in the absence of many specific details about what happened, there were numerous unanswered questions: How and why did the airliner go off course? Why were there apparently no direct communication between Soviet the [sic] air defenses and the airliner? Did someone order an attack and why? Finally, why would an attack be carried out when a warning signal might have sufficed to make a plane land?

The spate of questions can be seen as a means of addressing the reader. The last question goes further. It attempts to direct the thought of the reader. The question begins with a heavy emphasis on the first word, "Finally," and then directs the reader's attention to the international procedures already noted. Why was a warning not given? Why were international aviation rules not followed? These questions are offered directly to the

reader for consideration. They are an attempt to offer consensus.

Other means of address that might be seen as attempts to elicit responses from readers are references to "the United States." In the context of the text world, the synecdoche can be seen as a means of representing cultural consensus. In the context of appropriation, the synecdoche can be seen as an offer of consensus to individual readers.

b) Textual Cues.

The isolation of the Soviet Union in the account is aided by textual cues. Twice, Soviet explanations of the shooting are preceded by such cues. The first mention of a Soviet explanation is preceded by the comment: "A Soviet explanation late yesterday was rebuffed by the State Department as 'totally inadequate.'" And the Soviet statement itself is framed in negative terms by the State Department. The text reads:

> The State Department spokesman John Hughes, said a message from the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei A. Gromyko, asserted only [italics added] that a plane had been sighted flying without navigational lights, had not responded to signals by Soviet interceptors and had ignored efforts to direct it to a landing site.

The question here is not whether the text contains bias, but whether it offers a text world.

Later in the account, the adverb "only" again qualifies Soviet statements: "The Soviet press agency Tass said only that 'an unidentified plane' had twice intruded in Soviet airspace."

The news account then goes on to quote two paragraphs of the Tass statement and comments: "The Tass report did not mention any air attack and left numerous questions unanswered, including what action Soviet planes took and why."

Through such qualifications and comments, the news account actively orders a view of events for readers. In some ways, such ordering can be seen as good, interpretive reporting. But the news account does much more than interpret. It describes a world with its own traditions and beliefs, and offers responses to that world, responses that might deepen the understanding of readers.

c) Models.

A news story may also attempt to direct responses through the use of government spokespersons, cultural leaders, or even "average citizens" whose responses might serve as models for appropriation. In the account, President Reagan certainly serves as such a model. He appears almost immediately, in the third paragraph, after a brief description of the attack. "President Reagan expressed 'revulsion,'" the paragraph begins.

The actions of the president of the United States are newsworthy, yet it is of interest that the paragraph begins with the president's expression instead of his actions. In this context, in this text, the president is not only a newsworthy figure, but also a cultural model for appropriation.

Other models of appropriation are offered. "Members of Congress and other American officials erupted in a fury of outrage," the text says. The lack of details, such as which members erupted and how, suggests the reactions are included as a

means of offering a response rather than supplying information; the reactions are a means of building and offering consensus.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz also is offered as a model for appropriation. The text says Shultz "demanded an explanation from the Soviet Union and told reporters, 'The Soviet pilot reported that he fired a missile and the target was destroyed.'" The strong verb "demanded" and the inclusion of the emphatic, dramatic report invite readers to respond.

The next reference to Shultz also portrays him as a model for response. "Mr. Shultz was grim-faced and his voice sometimes broke with emotion as he reconstructed the drama." Certainly, Shultz's emotional response appears more than legitimate. But from the perspective of appropriation, the details of Shultz's emotions can be seen as an attempt by the text to direct a response to the world which it has constructed.

DISCUSSION

The New York Times account of the shooting of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 has been analyzed through Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach. The purpose of hermeneutic study, Ricoeur has said (1977, p. 220), is to display the world of the text, and the analysis has found in the report a meaningful, complex world, with traditions, assumptions and beliefs. Possible implications of this world are the subject of this section.

In the New York Times report, the international incident is portrayed in the narrow context of U.S. affairs. Firmly grounded in U.S. culture, the report gives heavy emphasis to U.S. officials, U.S. reactions, and possible U.S. reprisals, and

affirms a dominant U.S. role in world affairs. The report is U.S. news, an emphasis so natural it does not seem particularly remarkable.

But to acknowledge and accept that world events will be portrayed in national contexts has implications for the traditional role of news in society. The Times report supplies information and interpretation, context and consensus, global scope and cultural concern. The account achieves a kind of balance between transmission and ritual (Carey, 1975), offering a report on world events and the representation of shared belief.

The world of the Times report, however, offers more than insights into the news. As a symbolic act, the report adds to and takes from a cultural context that is created and maintained by and in the report. What can the world of the report say about this context?

In one sense, the report presents a world of diplomacy. It is a world of spokespersons and ambassadors, presidents and foreign ministers, councils and congresses, laws and procedures, and protests and sanctions. The account presents a world of civilized, bureaucratized nations working in the aftermath of an act they saw as a great enormity. Ambassadors are summoned; councils are convened; procedures are stressed; sanctions are considered. The report assumes: The response to disruption of the social order is the studied hum of institutions, the machinations of states. In the world of the Times text, then, institutions and states are legitimated and confirmed.

Gaye Tuchman has noted similar features in news reports, stating that news, like myth, "presents a politically legitimated reality" (1981, p. 90). She writes:

> As myth, news suggests that social and economic forces (never analyzed but detailed through the logic of the concrete) are "primeval forces" akin to the bureaucratized legitimated institutions designed to cope with them. Social and economic forces as legitimated institutions become actors in a post-industrial passion play.

In another sense, a more profound world might be found, one tied to representations of the Soviet Union in U.S. culture. In the Times account, the actions of the Soviet pilot place the Soviet state outside the pale of other nations. As violator of the world order, the Soviet Union must receive the censure of the community, the report suggests. Actors are taken from capitals "around the world." Acts focus on reaction and condemnation. A consensus is established: The Soviet Union "'deserves the censure of the entire world.'"

From this perspective, the Times report can be seen as a drama of victimage (Burke, 1984, 274-93). The report creates and then castigates an enemy shared by a group in a dramatic enactment that offers integration, identification, and social cohesion.

Burke says the process of victimage might be found in all societies. He cites powerful examples such as Christ's Passion, the tragedies of ancient Greece, rituals of the scapegoat, and modern tragedies, including Hitler's victimage of the Jews and

Stalin's purges. Burke sees the drama of victimage as "the very centre of man's social motivation" (1984, p. 285), and asks "whether human societies could possibly cohere without symbolic victims which the individual members of the group share in common."

Victimage, quite possibly, is the essential world of the New York Times report revealed by Ricoeur's hermeneutics. Drawing from a cultural context that already pits as mythic rivals the United States and Soviet Union, the report uses the enormity of the airliner shooting to present the Soviet Union as an enemy shared in common by the nation and world. The enactment of victimage, in its offer of national and international consensus against the Soviets, extends to Times readers the opportunity to participate in a great modern drama that creates and confirms the cultural context of which it is part.

The analysis does not disregard the important influence of the Times report as informer of events and observer of world and government activities. These characteristics too can be found in the account. But the interpretation suggests that the news story can be understood in another way. With information about a tragic event and reactions of the international community, set amidst the conflict and context of U.S. culture, the New York Times report organizes and fashions a dramatic narrative of victimage.

In the minutiae of this one news report, we can recognize part of the ongoing process that Burke feels is essential in critical study of society. He says, any scheme that shifts

attention from victimage to other motivational areas is a costly error, "except insofar as its insights can be brought back into the area of this central quandary" (1984, p. 285, his italics). Through the schema of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, the central quandary of victimage is revealed in the world of the New York Times account. A dramatic enactment that shapes and is shaped by cultural context, the report offers social cohesion and integration through the front-page sacrifice of the victim.

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Flight 007: New York Times Account

By ROBERT D. McFADDEN

A South Korean airliner missing with 269 people on a flight from New York to Seoul was shot down in the Sea of Japan by a Soviet jet fighter near a Soviet island off Siberia, the United States said yesterday.

There were no known survivors of the attack, in which a heat-seeking missile was said to have been fired

Statements by U.S., page A5.

without warning at the airliner by an interceptor that had tracked it over Soviet territory for two and a half hours.

President Reagan expressed "revulsion" over what he called "a horrifying act of violence." He cut short his California vacation and called a National Security Council meeting in Washington today to discuss possible reprisals.

U.N. Meeting Requested

Members of Congress and other American officials erupted in a fury of outrage, and the United States and South Korea requested a United Nations Security Council meeting on the incident. The Council was expected to begin debate today.

There was no clear explanation for the reported attack, which occurred amid several puzzling circumstances. There was an unconfirmed report that the airliner had experienced radio trouble. Soviet officials said it was flying without lights. And United States authorities acknowledged that it was far off course, despite carrying what South Korean officials called sophisticated navigational equipment.

As American, Soviet and Japanese ships and planes searched frigid seas north of Japan and reportedly found traces of fuel where the jet apparently went down, Secretary of State George P. Shultz demanded an explanation from the Soviet Union and told reporters, "The Soviet pilot reported that he fired a missile and the target was destroyed." [Page A5.]

Soviet Explanation Rejected

A Soviet explanation late yesterday was rebuffed by the State Department as "totally inadequate." The Soviet statement did not acknowledge that a Soviet plane had shot down the airliner and did not accept responsibility for the incident, the State Department said.

The State Department spokesman, John Hughes, said a message from the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei A. Gromyko, asserted only that a plane had been sighted flying without navigational lights, had not responded to signals by Soviet interceptors and had ignored efforts to direct it to a landing site.

South Korea's President, Chun Doo Hwan, accused the Soviet Union of "a barbarous act" that "deserves the censure of the entire world." People all over South Korea condemned the attack. Japanese officials said they, too, believed the airliner had been shot down by a Soviet jet fighter and called the incident "very regrettable."

In capitals around the world, governments called in Soviet ambassadors to deliver outraged protests. The French Foreign Ministry expressed its "sharpest indignation." The British Foreign Office called the incident "deeply disturbing." The Swedish Foreign Minister said he was "deeply shocked." And Canadian airline pilots called it a "despicable, bloody criminal act" and threatened retaliatory steps.

Relatives and friends grieved for those on the plane — about 30 Americans, including Representative Larry P. McDonald, Democrat of Georgia; 72 Koreans, 22 Japanese, 34 Taiwanese and more than 80 people of other nationalities, in addition to a crew of 29.

Calls to Revoke Grain Agreement

"There were no circumstances that can justify the unprecedented attack on an unarmed commercial aircraft," Larry Speakes, the President's chief spokesman, told reporters at Mr. Reagan's ranch in Santa Barbara, Calif. Mr. Speakes declined to speculate on possible retaliation, but there were calls in Congress for revocation of the recent agreement to supply American grain to the Soviet Union.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A crisis atmosphere surrounded the the incident, one of the most serious international aerial confrontations in years. In 1978, a Soviet fighter forced a South Korean jetliner down in northern European Russia, killing two passengers.

Mr. Shultz was grim-faced and his voice sometimes broke with emotion as he reconstructed the drama, which he said occurred in darkness some 32,000 feet over the Sea of Japan as up to eight Soviet fighters tracked the airliner.

He said the Soviet fighter that fired the missile was "in constant contact with its ground control" and flew "close enough for a visual inspection." He noted, however, that there was no evidence that the Soviet jets had signaled or warned the airliner and added, "There was no, apparently no, ability to communicate between the two aircraft."

Under international aviation rules, which are endorsed by the Soviet Union, an established procedure for an interceptor to warn a straying aircraft at night is to flash lights at irregular intervals while dipping its wings. The intercepted plane responds by flashing its navagational and landing lights. There was no indication whether any such exchange occurred.

"The United States reacts with revulsion to this attack," said Mr. Shultz. "Loss of life appears to be heavy. We can see no excuse whatsoever for this appalling act."

Flight Left New York on Tuesday

The Secretary of State's announcement in Washington ended nearly a day of uncertainty over the fate of Korean Air Lines Flight 7, a Boeing 747 jumbo jet that left New York at 11:50 Tuesday night, refueled in Alaska 10 hours later and vanished from Japanese radar screens less than 5 hours after that.

The Japanese news agency Kyodo said a Soviet radio communication had been monitored by Japanese military intelligence that gave this exchange, apparently between the Soviet fighter and its ground station just before the airliner's disappearance:

"Take aim at the target."

"Aim taken."

"Fire"

"Fired."

Mr. Shultz and other American officials said the airliner had apparently strayed off course over Sakhalin, the Soviet island north of Japan, and that it was on a course that would have taken it out of Soviet airspace. But, they said, it was shot down without warning by an air-to-air missile.

Explosion Called Possible

In Tokyo, a Japanese military spokesman said radar information supported the theory that the plane might have exploded in midair after having been hit by a missile. The spokesman said pulses received from a special device in all civilian and military planes stopped at the same time as the plane disappeared from the screens.

The airliner was lost at 3:38 A.M. Thursday, Japanese time (2:38 P.M. Wednesday, Eastern daylight time) in the Sea of Japan, between Sakhalin and Moneron Island, about 30 miles southwest of the southern tip of Sakhalin. The site is about 700 miles north of Tokyo and about 800 miles northeast of Seoul.

Sakhalin is part of the Soviet Far Eastern military network, with air bases, radar stations and other tracking installations.

Amid conflicting reports and in the absence of many specific details about what happened, there were numerous unanswered questions:

How and why did the airliner go off course? Why was there apparently no direct communication between Soviet the air defenses and the airliner? Did someone order an attack and why? Finally, why would an attack be carried out when a warning signal might have sufficed to make a plane land?

The Soviet Union, which had earlier denied an erroneous Korean Government report that the plane had been forced by Soviet jets to land on Sakhalin, issued its only official remarks in the note to the State Department. But Moscow gave no public account.

The Soviet press agency Tass said only that "an unidentified plane" had twice intruded in Soviet airspace, first over the Kamchatka Peninsula off the Siberian coast west of the Aleutian Islands and later over Sakhalin Island.

"The plane did not have navigation lights," the Tass report said, and "did not respond to queries" from Soviet air defenses. The Tass report added:

"Fighters of the antiaircraft defense, which were sent aloft toward the intruder plane, tried to give it assistance in directing it to the nearest airfield. But the intruder plane did not react to the signals and warnings from the Soviet fighters and continued its flight in the direction of the Sea of Japan."

The Tass report did not mention any air attack and left numerous questions unanswered, including what action Soviet planes took and why.

Airline Officials Dubious

Korean Air Lines officials in New York contended that the airliner could not have strayed off course into Soviet airspace because of what they called "sophisticated" navigational equipment on board. They also said the pilot of the airliner would have landed if he had been ordered to do so.

The captain of another Korean Air Lines plane that crossed the path of Flight 7 over the Aleutians said in Anchorage yesterday that the airliner appeared to be having radio trouble. He said he had tried to radio the other plane to share weather information but had been unable to make contact.

"His radio was very garbled," Capt. S. S. Yang said.

"They did not understand each other," he said, referring to the radio operators of the two airliners. "I tried to relay, but he couldn't hear me. I tried to call him several times."

A spokesman for the United States Federal Aviation Administration said he knew of no such radio difficulties.

Flight Began at Kennedy

The flight of K.A.L. 7 began at Kennedy International Airport at 11:50 P.M. Tuesday. According to airline officials in New York, the plane carried more navigational equipment than is standard on such 747's.

"Since we skirt this area here very closely," said Ralph Strafaci, the district sales manager, "the equipment we have on board is very important and very technical. It's a very difficult thing for that aircraft to stray." He said he could not elaborate.

Flight 7 is one of five weekly flights from New York to the South Korean capital. A spokesman for Korean Air Lines said last night's Flight 7 was fully booked and left Kennedy Airport on time.

On Tuesday night's flight, the airliner, with 244 passengers and 29 crew members, first flew to Anchorage for a refueling stop.

Four passengers left the flight there, and the plane took off again at about 10 A.M. Wednesday, New York time. It was over the Aleutians shortly thereafter that the passing Korean Air Lines plane tried unsuccessfully to raise the airliner by radio, according to the captain.

Two hours after leaving Anchorage, according to Mr. Shultz's chronology, Flight 7 "came to the attention of Soviet radar" and was constantly tracked by the Soviet Union thereafter.

It then apparently strayed into Soviet airspace over Kamchatka, a peninsula the size of Sweden that juts into the north Pacific between of the Bering Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk. It is believed to have many military installations.

Almost immediately, Soviet jet fighters scrambled, according to the American account. There were conflicting reports on whether the fighters were MIG-23's or 1960's vintage SU-15's.

The Soviet jets apparently pursued the airliner out of Soviet airspace and over the Sea of Okhotsk. Next, the planes re-entered Soviet airspace over Sakhalin Island, a mountainous 600-mile sliver of land north of Japan that has air and naval installations.

What happened next was apparently monitored by United States intelligence installations, although this was not made explicit.

At 3:12 A.M. Thursday (2:12 P.M. Wednesday, New York time), Mr. Shultz said, a Soviet fighter pilot reported visual contact with the airliner.

At 3:21, he reported that the airliner's altitude was 32,000 feet.

In the next two minutes, Japanese air-traffic controllers at Narita, a huge airport outside Tokyo, received the airliner's last radio transmissions. A transcript provided by the Japanese Transport Ministry showed this:

K.A.L.: Will climb to 35,000 feet. Leaving 32,000 altitude.

Narita: Roger.

K.A.L.: This is K.A.L. 7.

Narita: We can't hear you. Please change to 10.048 kHz. K.A.L. 7, this is Tokyo radio. How is 10.048 kHz?

There was no response.

At 3:26 A.M., Mr. Shultz said, "the Soviet pilot reported that he fired a missile and the target was destroyed."

Four minutes later, the Secretary of State said, the Soviet pilot reported the Korean aircraft at 15,000 feet. And eight minutes later, he said, the airliner disappeared from radar screens.